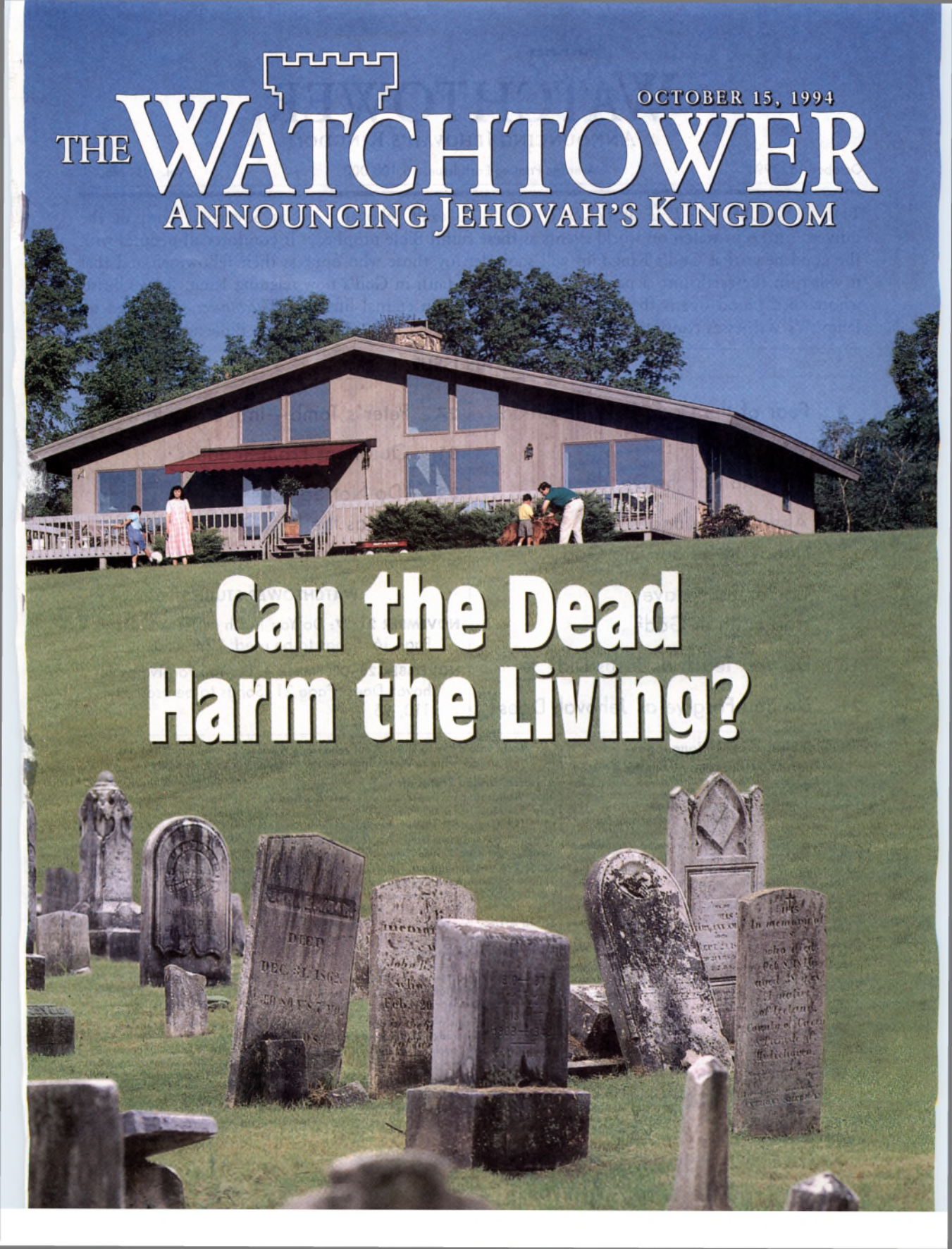




OCTOBER 15, 1994

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**Can the Dead
Harm the Living?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

October 15, 1994

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Fear of the Dead Is Widespread



The sun has long since set. You are returning home a bit later than you would like. As your walk takes you past the local cemetery, your heart begins to beat a little faster. The quietness of the dark night makes you aware of the slightest noise. Suddenly you hear in the distance a shrill, startling sound. You quicken your pace—your pulse quickens too—as you head for the protection of home.

HAVE you ever experienced anxious feelings when you were in or near a cemetery? If so, you may have been influenced by a religious concept that is common worldwide—that the spirits of the dead can help or harm the living.

Many superstitious customs have developed as a result of the belief that the dead need the help of the living or that they may harm the living if not appeased. In some Latin-American countries, for instance, many have the custom of erecting a little dwelling with a cross where a person has died from an accident. People light candles and put flowers there in an effort to show

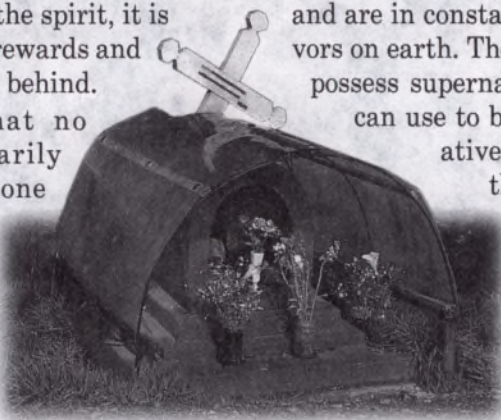
interest in or to help the soul or spirit of the dead person. In some cases, reports about “miraculous” answers to prayers are circulated, so that people begin to frequent the place of the *animita*, the little dwelling for the soul or spirit of the dead individual. There they make *mandas*, or promises, that if the dead person will help them accomplish or receive something—perhaps a miraculous cure—they will show their gratitude in a special way. On the other hand, it may be reported that the soul of a person appears in the darkness of night, terrifying those present. It is commonly said that such souls are *penando*, annoying the living because of past events.

In many lands people put forth great effort to appease the “spirits” of the dead. Elaborate feasts are held, sacrifices offered, soothing words spoken—all in an attempt to ward off retribution from the dead person’s spirit. Placating the spirit, it is thought, will result in rewards and blessings for those left behind.

“Many believe that no event occurs ‘ordinarily or naturally,’” says one report from Africa. “Any incident—be it sickness, disaster, infertility, economic hardship, excessive rainfall or sun-

shine, accidents, family disunity, death—is thought to be caused by unseen spirits having superhuman powers.” Another report says: “People believe that the spirits of their ancestors occupy a place in heaven and are in constant watch over their survivors on earth. The ancestors are believed to possess supernatural powers, which they can use to bless and protect their relatives on earth or to punish them, depending on the relatives’ honor or neglect of the dead.”

But does such harmonize with the Word of God? What is your opinion?



An “Animita” in Chile

What Is the Condition of the Dead?

FEAR of the dead rests on one premise—that the deceased has a soul or spirit that lives on after death. If the Bible plainly teaches that this concept is false, then the question of whether the dead can harm you is laid to rest. So, then, what does the Bible say?

Concerning the condition of the dead, God’s Word says: “The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten. Also, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they have no portion anymore to time indefinite

in anything that has to be done under the sun.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.

In view of that, can the dead help or harm you? No, say the Scriptures. The dead are unconscious and in silence. They are incapable of communicating with the living or of expressing any emotion—love or hate—or of carrying out any action. You need not have any fear of them.

‘Well, yes, that may be true if you refer to death of the physical body,’ some may say. ‘But a physical death is not the end of life; it just releases the spirit from the body. That spirit could help or harm the living.’ Millions of people earth wide feel that way.

For example, in Madagascar life is considered a mere transition, so a funeral and an exhumation are considered more important than a wedding. It is thought that the person came from his ancestors and returns to them at death. Hence, houses for the living are made of wood and adobe, materials that disintegrate in time, whereas tombs, the "homes" for the dead, are generally more elaborate and durable. At an exhumation, family and friends feel that they will be blessed, and women believe that if they touch the bones of the dead relative, they will become fertile. But, again, what does God's Word say?

Death Not Intended for Mankind

It is interesting to note that Jehovah God created man to live, and he spoke of death only as a consequence of disobedience. (Genesis 2:17) Regrettably, the first man and woman did sin, and as a result, sin spread to all humankind as a death-dealing inheritance. (Romans 5:12) So you could say that death has been a fact of life ever since the disobedience of the first human pair, yes, a painful fact of life. We were created to live, which partially explains why it is so hard for countless millions to face up to death as being the end.

According to the Bible account, Satan tried to deceive the first human pair about death by contradicting God's warning that disobedience would bring death. (Genesis 3:4) With the passing of time, though, it became clearly apparent that humans die just as God said they would. Thus, over the centuries Satan responded with yet another lie—that some spirit part of man survives the death of the body. Such a deception fits Satan the Devil, whom Jesus described as "the father of the lie." (John 8:44) On the contrary, God's answer to death is an encouraging promise.

What Promise?

It is the promise of a resurrection for many. The Greek word translated "resurrection" is *anastasis*. It literally means "a standing up again," and it refers to a raising up from death. Yes, man lies down in death, but God by his power can raise a person up again. Man loses life, but God can give him life again. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, said that "the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) The apostle Paul expressed his "hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Job, a faithful servant of God in pre-Christian times, also declared his hope in a resurrection: "If an able-bodied man dies can he live again? All the days of my compulsory service I shall wait, until my relief comes. You [God] will call, and I myself shall answer you." —Job 14:14, 15.

Does not the clear promise of the resurrection give the lie to the idea that the dead are alive in a spirit form? If the dead were alive and enjoying existence in heaven or some spirit world, what would be the purpose of the resurrection? Would they not have already received their reward or destiny? A study of God's Word reveals that the dead are really dead, unconscious, asleep until the great awakening by resurrection in a new world—a paradise—promised by our loving Father, Jehovah. But if death does not mean a separation of body and spirit and if the spirit does not live on, what about the cases of seeming communications from the spirit world?

Communications From the Spirit Realm

Innumerable cases have been reported of communications supposedly received from

the spirit realm. What really is their origin? The Bible warns us that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is therefore a simple thing for his agents to masquerade as agents of good." (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15, *The New English Bible*) Yes, to deceive and mislead people more easily, the demons (rebellious angels) have communicated with the living, sometimes pretending to be helpful.

The apostle Paul gives further warning of this campaign of deception: "Some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1) So any response attributed to the dead may well be from the demons who masquerade as "agents of good" and promote a religious lie, enslaving people to superstitions that lead them away from the truth of God's Word.

Confirming that the dead cannot say anything, do anything, or feel anything, Psalm 146:3, 4 states: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." What spirit is it that "goes out"? It is the person's life-force that is sustained by breathing. Therefore, when the deceased stopped breathing, his senses no longer functioned. He enters into a state of complete unconsciousness. So it is impossible for him to hold mastery over the living.

That is why the Bible compares the death of a human to that of an animal, stating that both reach unconsciousness at death and return to the dust from which they were made. Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20 says: "There is an eventuality as respects the sons of mankind and an eventuality as respects the beast, and they have the same eventuality. As the one dies, so the other

dies; and they all have but one spirit, so that there is no superiority of the man over the beast, for everything is vanity. All are going to one place. They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust."

Knowing that the demons try to deceive people into thinking they can communicate with and be affected by the dead, Jehovah God warned his people, the ancient Israelites: "There should not be found in you . . . anyone who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead. For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah."—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

Clearly, the idea that the dead can harm us does not come from God. He is a God of truth. (Psalm 31:5; John 17:17) And he has a marvelous future in store for lovers of truth who worship him "with spirit and truth."—John 4:23, 24.

Jehovah, a God of Truth and Love

Our loving heavenly Father, "who cannot lie," has given his word: Millions upon millions who have died and have been put in tombs will be resurrected with the prospect of eternal life in a new world of righteousness! (Titus 1:1, 2; John 5:28) This loving promise of a resurrection reveals that Jehovah has a deep interest in the well-being of his human creation and a heartfelt desire to do away with death, sorrow, and pain. So there is no need to fear the dead or to be unduly concerned about them and their prospects. (Isaiah 25:8, 9; Revelation 21:3, 4) Our loving and just God, Jehovah, can and will resurrect them, undoing the pain of death.



God's Word, the Bible, abounds with descriptions of what conditions on earth will be like in that promised new world of righteousness. (Psalm 37:29; 2 Peter 3:13) It will be a time of peace and happiness and of love for all fellowmen. (Psalm 72:7; Isaiah 9:7; 11:6-9; Micah 4:3, 4) All will have secure, fine homes, as well as enjoyable work. (Isaiah 65:21-23) There will be plenty of good things for all to eat. (Psalm 67:6; 72:16) All will enjoy abundant health. (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6) While the apostles and an additional limited number will rule in heaven with Jesus, the Bible makes no mention of blessed conditions in heaven for the souls

As God's Word clearly shows, the dead are completely inactive until the resurrection

of others after death. (Revelation 5:9, 10; 20:6) This would be odd if the billions of those who have died live on after death.

But it is not odd when we know the Bible's clear teaching: The dead have ceased to exist as living souls. They cannot harm you. Those in the memorial tombs simply rest, unconscious until their resurrection in God's due time. (Ecclesiastes 9:10; John 11:11-14, 38-44) Our hopes and aspirations, then, rest in God. "Let us be joyful and rejoice in the salvation by him."—Isaiah 25:9.

Although Refugees,

WARS, famines, disasters, and unrest. For some people these are just headline news. For many others they are a part of daily life. Being a worldwide association of Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses are well aware that anytime a war breaks out or a disaster strikes, a part of their international brotherhood



may suffer. And when people have to flee for their lives, our brothers may have to do the same.

For years Witnesses in a number of countries in Africa have had to endure such experiences. Many of them have had to pack up whatever they could carry and seek refuge elsewhere. Although a few have had some means of transportation, perhaps a bicycle, the majority have had to walk and walk and walk—for days, even weeks—to reach their destination.

One such destination was a little town named Mboki, in the Central African Republic. Over the years, men and women, young and old, have come by the thousands. Among them were a number of our Christian brothers and sisters, accompa-

nied by interested ones. Of course, fellow Christians at the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, were very interested in meeting these refugees to provide help. Five times, a representative was sent with money, food, clothing, and medicine, generously provided by the Witnesses in Bangui, about 700 miles away. While those offering this generous help had little financially, they were happy to do what they could.

Getting to Mboki

The brothers at the branch office wanted to see what else could be done and how the refugees could be helped spiritually. So my wife and I took off in a four-wheel-drive Land Cruiser, accompanied by Symphorien, a special pioneer, and his wife. Symphorien knew the road well, and he speaks



Zande, a language of the refugees in Mboki. It took us four long days to get there.

The last 250 miles were through a beautiful area of rolling countryside and huge baobab trees. Here and there we passed lit-

Happy to Be Serving God

tle villages. On this stretch of road, my wife counted exactly 50 bridges—many in very bad shape, some impassable. We repaired some bridges with sticks and rotten beams, put the four-wheel-drive car in traction, prayed, and proceeded very carefully. If there was a little village nearby, youngsters would come running to help—for a small fee. We were surprised that they always found pieces of lumber and boards from the bridge in the deep grass and under bushes nearby. It made us wonder if they were taken off and kept there for customers in need.

On three occasions we refused the help of those youngsters, for the bridges looked too dangerous to cross. So we drove off the road, down into the creek, over rocks, uphill again, and back to the road. How glad we were that it was the dry season, as otherwise there would have been no way for us to make the trip, except perhaps by helicopter!

What would Mboki be like? This often came to our minds while driving on this endless “piste,” a French word used in the Central African Republic for a road or trail of sand, rocks, and rubble—and thousands of holes.



On the fourth day, just after noon, Symphorien pointed to some grass huts surrounded by papaya trees and cassava fields. “Voilà! This is where Mboki starts,” he shouted. We were quite surprised by what we saw. “This is Mboki? Where is the camp?” we asked, for what we saw was



not a camp, just houses scattered about. They were small but clean little huts with grass roofs. There were also trees and bushes everywhere. People plant crops next to their houses. Mboki was not the sort of camp we expected to see; it was a big village, about 22 miles long.

Meeting the Brothers

The brothers in Mboki knew we were coming, although they figured our trip would take five days. When they heard our car, they came running. Men, women, and children rushed out of their huts and compounds and came in from their fields to greet us. Everyone was smiling, laughing, and shaking hands, several times if possible. They held out their babies. All



wanted to say hello, and they gave us a most hearty welcome.

There was not much for my wife and me to do at the moment because of the language barrier. We tried with a little French, a little Sango, a little English, and Arabic. Most of our brothers speak, read, and write Zande. Symphorien had to translate, explaining the program for our visit.

We continued a few more miles and arrived at the Kingdom Hall. It was the first "church" built by refugees of any religion in Mboki. More brothers and their children and interested ones showed up to shake



hands. Even many neighboring children came along with the brothers to shake our hands.

Our brothers had prepared two little houses for us, their visitors. They were spotless. Buckets of clean water were ready and waiting for us. We had brought along our own food and drinking water, expecting the worst and in order not to burden our brothers. While we were unloading the vehicle, a young girl came and asked how we would like the chicken prepared that night, roasted or cooked in sauce? We never expected that and asked what they had planned to eat with it. The answer: cassava, or manioc. So we opted for the chick-



en in a spicy sauce. Our enormous hunger was well satisfied that night. But they kept on feeding us every day—noon and evening. We could hardly believe it—refugees feeding and taking care of us, though they themselves did not have much.

A Happy Little Congregation

Here we were, in such a remote place but among 21 of our brothers. Only two of them came here already baptized. The rest were interested persons when they came. They continued to study and were baptized over the last two years. Four more were baptized in a nearby river during our visit.

One outstanding example is Faustino. Before coming to Mboki, he learned basic

Bible truths from a friend. Faustino appreciated what he was learning. Soon he and his friend started preaching to others, but they ran into opposition and were put in prison for "exciting the population" with their religion. While in prison, Faustino's friend gave up out of fear and was released. Two months later Faustino was tried. However, it was clear that the accusations against him were unfounded, so he was released. When war came to his area, Faustino fled to the Central African Republic, where he met the brothers and resumed his Bible study. He was baptized in July 1991, and in 1992 he took up the full-time ministry as a regular pioneer.

The happy and friendly little congregation in Mboki now consists of one special pioneer and 21 publishers. Two English-speaking brothers serve as elders and are able to keep in good communication with the branch office in Bangui. We expected our refugee brothers to be in a terrible, desperate condition, but this was not the case. Though poor materially, nobody was complaining, worrying, or murmuring. Since their arrival the brothers have built their huts and houses and have started to grow food and raise chickens. They have less than they formerly did, but they are alive and are with fellow Christians.

Since there are between 17,000 and 20,000 refugees in Mboki, with more coming each month, our brothers have a large field for their ministry. We went preaching with them, which was very interesting, indeed. They often use the Bible in Zande, and this translation contains God's name in the Hebrew Scriptures and in several places in the Christian Greek Scriptures. To these people, God is not just "*Mboli*" (Zande for "God") but "*Yekova*," which is how they pronounce God's personal name.

"*Mboli Yekova*" is a common expression. Protestant translations in many other African languages do not follow this correct rendering; rather, they replace "Jehovah" with "*Nzapa*," "*Nzambe*," or other African names for God.

True to Jesus' prophecy, the Kingdom good news is being preached all over the world, even in Mboki. (Matthew 24:14) The congregation is now well supplied with Bibles, books, magazines, booklets, and tracts in all the languages they need. Perhaps in the future, more publications will be available in the Zande language.

Awaiting a Permanent Home

On the first evening, we showed the Society's slide program "Happy Conventioners in Eastern Europe Praise Jehovah." The next night the program was "Bringing the Many to Righteousness in the Time of the End." Projection took place outdoors, next to the Kingdom Hall, under a clear sky and a silvery moon. What an atmosphere! Hundreds came to watch these slide showings, and our brothers were happy and proud to present something special to the population.

When Monday came, we prepared for our return trip. It would be another four-day journey over the same roads and crossing the same 50 bridges. A sister insisted on preparing some food for the trip—two more chickens, already roasted and seasoned with garlic. They smelled so good during the morning hours in the Land Cruiser. At noon we stopped in the bush to enjoy roast chicken while thinking of our brothers in Mboki. Although obliged to be refugees, they continue to serve Jehovah faithfully, awaiting a permanent home of peace in God's promised new earth. (2 Peter 3:13) —Contributed.

Could Jesus Have Had Faith in God?

A Trinitarian Dilemma

“HOW could Jesus have had faith? He is God; he knows and sees everything without having to turn to anybody else. Now faith consists precisely in leaning on another and in admitting that which is not seen; that Jesus-God could have had faith, therefore, is excluded.”

According to the French theologian Jacques Guillet, that is the dominant opinion in Catholicism. Does this explanation surprise you? You may have thought that since Jesus is an example for Christians in everything, he must also be a model of faith. If you thought so, you have not reckoned with Christendom’s dogma of the Trinity.

The question of Jesus’ faith really is an enigma for Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox theologians who believe in the Trinity as “the central mystery of Christian faith and life.”* Not all deny Jesus’ faith, however. Jacques Guillet affirms that “it is impossible not to recognize that Jesus had faith,” though Guillet admits that, in the light of Trinity doctrine, it is a “paradox.”

French Jesuit Jean Galot, and like him the majority of theologians, is explicit in saying that being “true God and true man, . . . Christ cannot believe in himself.”

* A more extensive discussion of the groundlessness of the Trinity teaching can be found in the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

“Faith consists in believing in another, not in believing in oneself,” notes the periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*. The obstacle to recognizing Jesus’ faith, then, is the dogma of the Trinity, since the two concepts clearly contradict each other.

“The Gospels never speak about Jesus’ faith,” say the theologians. In effect, the terms used in the Christian Greek Scriptures *pi-steu’o* (believe, have faith) and *pi’-stis* (faith) generally refer to the faith of the disciples in God or in Christ, rather than Jesus’ faith in his heavenly Father. Should we thus conclude that God’s Son did not have faith? What can we understand from what he did and said? What do the Scriptures say?

Prayers Without Faith?

Jesus was a man of prayer. He prayed on every occasion—when he was baptized (Luke 3:21); the whole night before choosing his 12 apostles (Luke 6:12, 13); and before his miraculous transfiguration on the mountain, while with the apostles Peter, John, and James. (Luke 9:28, 29) He was praying when one of the disciples asked him: “Teach us how to pray,” so he taught them the Lord’s Prayer (the “Our Father”). (Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:9-13) He prayed alone and at length early in the morning (Mark 1:35-39); toward evening, on a mountain, after dismissing his disciples (Mark 6:45, 46); together with his disciples and for his disciples. (Luke 22:32; John 17:

1-26) Yes, prayer was an important part of Jesus' life.

He prayed before performing miracles, for example, before resurrecting his friend Lazarus: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. True, I knew that you always hear me; but on account of the crowd standing around I spoke, in order that they might believe that you sent me forth." (John 11:41, 42) The certainty that his Father would answer that prayer indicates the strength of his faith. This link between prayer to God and faith in Him is evident from what Christ said to the disciples: "All the things you pray and ask for have faith that you have practically received."—Mark 11:24.

If Jesus did not have faith, why did he pray to God? Christendom's unscriptural teaching of the Trinity, that Jesus was both man and God at the same time, obscures the Bible's message. It hinders people from understanding the Bible's simplicity and power. Whom did the man Jesus invoke? Himself? Was he unaware that he was God? And if he was God and knew it, why did he pray?

Jesus' prayers on the last day of his earthly life give us an even deeper insight into his firm faith in his heavenly Father. Manifesting hope and confident expectation, he requested: "So now you, Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was."—John 17:5.

Knowing that his most difficult trials and his death were imminent, the night he was in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, "he started to be grieved and to be sorely troubled," and he said: "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death." (Matthew 26:36-38) Then he knelt and prayed: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, let, not my will, but

yours take place." Then "an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him." God listened to his prayer. Because of the intensity of his emotions and the severity of the trial, "his sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground."—Luke 22:42-44.

What do Jesus' sufferings, his need to be strengthened, and his supplications indicate? "One thing is certain," writes Jacques Guillet, "Jesus prayed, and prayer is an essential aspect of his life and of his actions. He prayed as men pray, and he prayed in behalf of men. Now, men's prayers are inconceivable without faith. Would Jesus' prayers be conceivable without faith?"

Hanging on the torture stake shortly before his death, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, quoting a psalm of David. Then, in faith, with a loud voice, he cried out a final supplication: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit." (Luke 23:46; Matthew 27:46) One Italian interdenominational translation, *Parola del Signore*, says that Jesus 'entrusted his life' to the Father.

Jacques Guillet comments: "Showing us the Christ crucified, crying out to his Father through the psalms of Israel, the Gospel writers convince us that that cry, the cry of the only-begotten Son, a cry of complete anguish, a cry of total confidence, is a cry of faith, the cry of a death in faith."

Faced with this clear and dramatic evidence of faith, some theologians try to make a distinction between faith and "confidence." Such a distinction, however, is not based on the Scriptures.

But exactly what do the severe trials he endured reveal about Jesus' faith?

The "Perfector of Our Faith" Perfected

In the 11th chapter of his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul mentions the great

cloud of faithful men and women of pre-Christian times. He concludes, pointing to the greatest and perfect example of faith: "We look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame . . . Consider closely the one who has endured such contrary talk by sinners against their own interests, that you may not get tired and give out in your souls."—Hebrews 12:1-3.

The majority of theologians say that this verse does not speak of "Jesus' personal faith" but, rather, of his role as "initiator or founder of faith." The Greek term *teleiotes* that occurs in this phrase refers to someone who perfects, who realizes or completes something. As the "Perfecter," Jesus completed faith in the sense that his coming to the earth fulfilled Bible prophecies and thus established a more solid foundation for faith. But does this mean that *he* did not have faith?

The passages from the letter to the Hebrews that you can see in the box on page 15 leave no doubt. Jesus was perfected by his sufferings and his obedience. Though already a perfect man, his experiences made him perfect and complete in all things, even in faith, in order for him to become fully qualified as High Priest for the salvation of true Christians. He supplicated his Father "with strong outcries and tears," he was "faithful" to God, and he had "godly fear." (Hebrews 3:1, 2; 5:7-9) He was "tested in *all* respects" exactly "like ourselves," says Hebrews 4:15, that is, like any faithful Christian whose faith undergoes "various trials." (James 1:2, 3) Is it reasonable to believe that Jesus could be put to the test "*like*" his followers without being tested in his faith as they are?

Supplications, obedience, suffering,

trials, faithfulness, and godly fear attest to the complete faith of Jesus. They indicate that he became the "Perfecter of our faith" only after being made perfect in his own faith. Clearly, he was not God the Son, as the doctrine of the Trinity asserts.—1 John 5:5.

Did He Not Believe God's Word?

The Trinity doctrine so conditions theologians' thinking that they come to the extreme view of maintaining that Jesus "cannot *believe* God's Word and its message" because "as the very Word of God, he can only *proclaim* that word."—Angelo Amato, *Gesù il Signore*, with the ecclesiastical imprimatur.

Yet, what do Jesus' continual references to the Scriptures really show? When he was tempted, he quoted from the Scriptures three times. His third reply told Satan that Jesus worshiped God alone. (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) On several occasions Jesus mentioned prophecies that applied to himself, showing faith in their fulfillment. (Mark 14:21, 27; Luke 18:31-33; 22:37; compare Luke 9:22; 24:44-46.) From this examination we must conclude that Jesus knew the Scriptures inspired by his Father, he observed them with faith, and he had complete trust in the fulfillment of the prophecies that foretold his trials, suffering, death, and resurrection.

Jesus, the Model of Faith to Imitate

Jesus had to fight the fight of the faith down to the end in order to maintain loyalty to his Father and to 'conquer the world.' (John 16:33) Without faith, it is impossible to achieve such a victory. (Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:4) On account of that victorious faith, he was an example to his faithful followers. He certainly had faith in the true God.

Jesus, the “Perfecter,” Perfected

Hebrews 2:10:

“It was fitting for the one for whose sake all things are and through whom all things are, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Chief Agent of their salvation *perfect through sufferings.*”

Hebrews 2:17, 18:

“He was obliged to become *like his ‘brothers’ in all respects*, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, in order to offer propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered when *being put to the test*, he is able to come to the aid of those who are being put to the test.”



Hebrews 3:2:

“He was *faithful* to the One that made him such, as Moses was also in all the house of that One.”

Hebrews 4:15:

“We have as high priest, not one who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but *one who has been tested in all respects like ourselves*, but without sin.”

Hebrews 5:7-9:

“In the days of his flesh Christ offered up *supplications* and also *petitions* to the One who was able to save him out of death, *with strong outcries and tears*, and he was favorably heard for *his godly fear*. Although he was a Son, *he learned obedience from the things he suffered*; and after he had been *made perfect* he became responsible for everlasting salvation.”



DO YOU TEACH AS JESUS DID?

“The crowds were astounded at his way of teaching; for he was teaching them as a person having authority, and not as their scribes.”—MATTHEW 7:28, 29.

WHEREVER Jesus went, the crowds flocked to him. “He went around throughout the whole of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news of the kingdom and curing every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity among the people.” As the report of his activities spread, “great crowds followed him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from the other side of the Jordan.” (Matthew 4:23, 25) On seeing them, “he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shep-

herd.” As he taught they could sense the pity or tender affection he felt for them; it was like a soothing salve on their wounds that drew them close to him.—Matthew 9:35, 36.

² What miraculous physical healings Jesus performed—making lepers clean, the deaf hear, the blind see, cripples walk, the dead come back to life! Surely these spectacular demonstrations of Jehovah’s power working through Jesus would draw crowds in great numbers! But the miracles were not the only things that drew them; large crowds came also for the spiritual healing

1. Who followed Jesus as he taught in Galilee, and what was Jesus’ reaction?

2. In addition to the miracles of Jesus, what drew large crowds?

provided when Jesus was teaching. Note their response, for example, after hearing his famous Sermon on the Mount: "When Jesus finished these sayings, the effect was that the crowds were astounded at his way of teaching; for he was teaching them as a person having authority, and not as their scribes." (Matthew 7:28, 29) Their rabbis quoted oral traditions from ancient rabbis as their authority. Jesus taught them with authority from God: "The things I speak, just as the Father has told me them, so I speak them."—John 12:50.

His Teaching Reached the Heart

³ The difference between Jesus' teaching and that of the scribes and the Pharisees was not only the content—truths from God in contrast with burdensome oral traditions from men—but also the way it was delivered. The scribes and the Pharisees were arrogant and harsh, haughtily demanding exalting titles and sneeringly dismissing the crowds as "accursed people." Jesus, though, was meek, mild, kind, sympathetic, and often yielding, and he was moved with pity for them. Jesus taught not only with correct words but also with winsome words from his heart, which went directly to the hearts of his hearers. His joyful message drew people to him, brought them early to the temple to hear him, and caused them to hang onto him and listen to him with pleasure. They turned out in droves to hear him, declaring: "Never has another man spoken like this."—John 7:46-49; Mark 12:37; Luke 4:22; 19:48; 21:38.

⁴ Certainly, one of the reasons the people felt attracted to his teaching was his use of illustrations. Jesus saw what others

saw, but he thought of things that never occurred to them. Lilies growing in the fields, birds building their nests, men sowing grain, shepherds bringing in lost lambs, women sewing patches on old garments, children playing in the marketplace, fishermen hauling in their nets—commonplace things that everyone saw—were never common in the eyes of Jesus. Everywhere he looked, he saw what he could use to illustrate God and His Kingdom or to make a point about human society around him.

⁵ Jesus' illustrations are based on everyday things that people have seen many times, and when truths are tied to these familiar things, they are etched quickly and deeply into the minds of those listening. Such truths are not just heard; they are seen by the mind's eye and are easily recalled later. Jesus' parables were marked by simplicity, uncluttered by extraneous material that might get in the way and impede their understanding of truths. Consider, for example, the parable of the neighborly Samaritan. You see vividly what a good neighbor is. (Luke 10:29-37) Then there were the two sons—one who said he would work in the vineyard but did not, the other who said he would not but did. You quickly see what the bottom line of real obedience is—doing the job assigned. (Matthew 21:28-31) No minds dozed or wandered during Jesus' animated teaching. They were kept too busy with both listening and seeing.

Jesus Yielded When Love Favored It

⁶ Many times when the Bible speaks of being reasonable, a footnote shows that it means to be yielding. The wisdom from

3. How did Jesus' delivery of his message differ from that of the scribes and the Pharisees?

4. What in Jesus' preaching especially attracted many people?

5. On what did Jesus base his illustrations, and what made his parables effective?

6. When is being reasonable, or yielding, particularly helpful?

God is yielding when there are extenuating circumstances. We are to be reasonable, or yielding, at times. Elders should be willing to yield when love favors it and repentance merits it. (1 Timothy 3:3; James 3:17) Jesus left marvelous examples of yielding, making exceptions to general rules when mercy or compassion called for it.

⁷ Jesus once said: "Whoever disowns me before men, I will also disown him before my Father who is in the heavens." But he did not reject Peter, even though Peter denied him three times. There were extenuating circumstances, which Jesus evidently took into consideration. (Matthew 10:33; Luke 22:54-62) There were also extenuating circumstances when the unclean woman with a flow of blood broke the Mosaic Law by coming into the crowds. Jesus did not condemn her either. He understood her desperation. (Mark 1:40-42; 5:25-34; see also Luke 5:12, 13.) Jesus had told his apostles not to identify him as the Messiah, yet he did not rigidly cling to that rule when he identified himself as such to a Samaritan woman at the well. (Matthew 16:20; John 4:25, 26) In all these cases, love, mercy, and compassion made this yielding proper.—James 2:13.

⁸ It was different with the unyielding

7. What are some examples of Jesus' being yielding?

8. When would the scribes and the Pharisees bend rules, and when would they not?



scribes and Pharisees. For themselves they would break their Sabbath traditions to lead their bull to water. Or if their bull or their son fell into a well, they would break the Sabbath to get him out. But for the common people, they would not yield one bit! They were "not willing to budge [the requirements] with their finger." (Matthew 23:4; Luke 14:5) For Jesus, people meant more than most rules; for the Pharisees, rules meant more than people.

Becoming a "Son of the Commandment"

⁹ Some lament that there is only one incident in Jesus' boyhood that is recorded. Yet many fail to realize the great significance of that event. It is reported for us at Luke 2:46, 47: "After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in

9, 10. After returning to Jerusalem, where did Jesus' parents find him, and what was the import of Jesus' questioning?

the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them. But all those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers." Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* brings up the idea that in this case the Greek word for "questioning" was not just a boy's curiosity. The word could refer to questioning used in judicial examination, investigation, counterquestioning, even the "probing and cunning questions of the Pharisees and Sadducees," such as those mentioned at Mark 10:2 and 12:18-23.

¹⁰ The same dictionary continues: "In [the] face of this usage it may be asked whether . . . [Luke] 2:46 denotes, not so much the questioning curiosity of the boy, but rather His successful disputing. [Verse] 47 would fit in well with the latter view."* Rotherham's translation of verse 47 presents it as a dramatic confrontation: "Now all who heard him were beside themselves, because of his understanding and his answers." Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* says that their constant amazement means that "they stood out of themselves as if their eyes were bulging out."

¹¹ When Jesus' parents finally came on the scene, "they were astounded." (Luke 2:48) Robertson says that the Greek word in this expression means "to strike out, drive out by a blow." He adds that Joseph and Mary "were struck out" by what they saw and heard. In a sense, Jesus already was an astonishing teacher. And in view of this in-

* Of course, we have every reason to believe that Jesus would display appropriate regard for those older than he, especially the gray-headed and the priests.—Compare Leviticus 19:32; Acts 23:2-5.

11. What was the reaction of Mary and Joseph to what they saw and heard, and what does one theological dictionary suggest?

cident in the temple, Kittel's work makes the claim that "Jesus already commences in His boyhood the conflict in which His opponents will finally have to surrender."

¹² And surrender they did! Years later, it was by such questioning that Jesus defeated the Pharisees until they did not "dare from that day on to question him any further." (Matthew 22:41-46) The Sadducees were likewise silenced on the question of the resurrection, and "no longer did they have the courage to ask him a single question." (Luke 20:27-40) The scribes fared no better. After one of them had had an exchange with Jesus, "nobody had the courage anymore to question him."—Mark 12:28-34.

¹³ Why was this incident involving Jesus and the teachers at the temple the one singled out from his boyhood for recounting? It was a turning point in the life of Jesus. When he was about 12 years of age, he became what Jews would term a "son of the commandment," responsible for observing all of its ordinances. When Mary complained to Jesus about the mental distress he had caused her and Joseph, her son's reply indicated that he likely realized the miraculous nature of his birth and his Messianic future. That is suggested by his noting that in a very direct way, God was his Father: "Why did you have to go looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in the house of my Father?" Incidentally, these are the first words from Jesus that are recorded in the Bible, and they indicate his awareness of Jehovah's purpose for his being sent to the earth. Thus, this entire episode is one of major significance.—Luke 2:48, 49.

12. What marked Jesus' later interchanges with religious leaders?

13. What was it that made the episode at the temple significant in Jesus' life, and what further awareness does it suggest?

Jesus Loves and Understands Children

¹⁴ This account should be especially thrilling to young people. It shows how diligently Jesus must have studied as he grew toward manhood. Rabbis at the temple were awestruck at the wisdom of this 12-year-old “son of the commandment.” Yet he still worked with Joseph in the carpenter shop, “continued subject to” him and Mary, and increased “in favor with God and men.”—Luke 2:51, 52.

¹⁵ Jesus was very supportive of young people during his earthly ministry: “When the chief priests and the scribes saw the marvelous things he did and the boys that were crying out in the temple and saying: ‘Save, we pray, the Son of David!’ they became indignant and said to him: ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’ Jesus said to them: ‘Yes. Did you never read this, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have furnished praise?”’” (Matthew 21:15, 16; Psalm 8:2) He is just as supportive of hundreds of thousands of young people today who are keeping their integrity and fur-

14. What interesting points might the account of young Jesus at the temple bring home to young people?

15. How was Jesus supportive of young people during his earthly ministry, and what does this mean for young people today?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ Why did crowds flock to Jesus?
- ☐ Why at times did Jesus yield on some rules?
- ☐ What may we learn from Jesus’ questioning of the temple teachers?
- ☐ What lessons can we draw from Jesus’ relationship with children?

nishing praise, some of them even having done so at the cost of their lives!

¹⁶ When the apostles argued over which one was the greatest, Jesus said to the 12: “‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and minister of all.’ And he took a young child, stood it in their midst and put his arms around it and said to them: ‘Whoever receives one of such young children on the basis of my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives, not me only, but also him that sent me forth.’” (Mark 9: 35-37) Moreover, when he was heading for Jerusalem for the last time, to face a horrendous ordeal and death, he took time out for children: “Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to suchlike ones.” He then “took the children into his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them.”—Mark 10:13-16.

¹⁷ Jesus knows what it is like to be a child in an adult world. He lived with adults, worked with them, experienced being subject to them, and also felt the warm, secure feeling of being loved by them. Children, this same Jesus is your friend; he died for you, and you will live forever if you obey his commands.—John 15:13, 14.

¹⁸ To do as Jesus commands is not as hard as it might seem. Young people, he is there for you and for everyone else, just as we read at Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to me, all you who are toiling and load-

16. (a) What lesson did Jesus teach his apostles by standing a young child in their midst? (b) At what very crucial time in Jesus’ life did he still have time for children?

17. Why was it easy for Jesus to relate to children, and what must children remember about him?

18. What breathtaking thought should we keep in mind, especially during times of stress or peril?

ed down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you [or, “Get under my yoke with me,” footnote] and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light.” Just imagine, as you walk through life serving Jehovah, Jesus is walking alongside you, making the yoke kindly and the load light. That is a breathtaking thought for all of us!

¹⁹ After reviewing just a few of the ways in which Jesus taught, do we find that we teach as he did? When we see those who are physically ill or spiritually starved, are we moved with pity to do what we can to help them? When we instruct others, do we teach God’s Word, or, like the Pharisees, do we teach our own ideas? Are we alert

19. What questions about Jesus’ ways of teaching may we review from time to time?

to see the everyday things around us that can be used to clarify, visualize, crystallize, and enhance the understanding of spiritual truths? Do we avoid holding rigidly to certain rules when, because of circumstances, love and mercy are better served by yielding on the application of such rules? And what about children? Do we show them the same gentle concern and loving-kindness that Jesus did? Do you encourage your children to study the way Jesus did as a boy? Will you act with firmness as Jesus did but be ready to receive repentant ones warmly, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings?—Matthew 23:37.

²⁰ If we strive to do our best to teach as Jesus did, certainly he will let us ‘get under his yoke with him.’—Matthew 11:28-30.

20. With what delightful thought may we comfort ourselves as we serve our God?

DO YOU FORGIVE AS JEHOVAH DOES?

“If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”—MATTHEW 6:14, 15.

“JEHOVAH is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness. He will not for all time keep finding fault, neither will he to time indefinite keep resentful. He has not done to us even according to our sins;

1, 2. What kind of God do we need, and why?

nor according to our errors has he brought upon us what we deserve. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, his loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those

fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.”—Psalm 103:8-14.

² Conceived in sin and brought forth with error, with inherited imperfections always trying to lead us captive to sin’s law, we sorely need a God who ‘remembers that we are made of dust.’ Three hundred years after David described Jehovah so beautifully in the 103rd Psalm, another Bible writer, Micah, extolled this same God in much the same way for his gracious forgiving of sins once committed: “What god can compare with you: taking fault away, pardoning crime, not cherishing anger for ever but delighting in showing mercy? Once more have pity on us, tread down our faults, to the bottom of the sea throw all our sins.”—Micah 7:18, 19, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

³ In the Greek Scriptures, the word for “forgive” means to “let go off.” Note that David and Micah, quoted above, convey the same meaning in winsome, descriptive words. To appreciate fully the amazing extent of Jehovah’s forgiveness, let us review a few of the many examples of it in action. The first one shows that Jehovah’s mind can be turned from destruction to forgiveness.

Moses Intercedes—Jehovah Listens

⁴ Jehovah brought the nation of Israel safely out of Egypt and near the land he had promised them as a homeland, but they refused to move forward, being afraid of mere men in Canaan. After having seen Jehovah deliver them from Egypt by ten destructive plagues, open an escape route through the Red Sea, destroy the Egyptian army that tried to follow them, inaugurate

with them at Mount Sinai the Law covenant that made them Jehovah’s chosen nation, and miraculously supply daily manna from heaven to sustain them, they were afraid to enter the Promised Land because of some overgrown Canaanites!—Numbers 14:1-4.

⁵ Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces in dismay. Joshua and Caleb, two faithful spies, tried to rally Israel: “The land is a very, very good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Do not fear the people; Jehovah is with us!” Instead of being encouraged by such words, the frightened, rebellious people tried to pelt Joshua and Caleb with stones.—Numbers 14:5-10.

⁶ Jehovah was angered! “Finally Jehovah said to Moses: ‘How long will this people treat me without respect, and how long will they not put faith in me for all the signs that I performed in among them? Let me strike them with pestilence and drive them away, and let me make you a nation greater and mightier than they are.’ But Moses said to Jehovah: ‘Then the Egyptians will be bound to hear that you by your power have led this people up out of their midst. And they will be bound to tell it to the inhabitants of this land. . . . Were you to put this people to death as one man, then the nations who have heard of your fame would certainly say this, “Because of Jehovah’s not being able to bring this people into the land about which he swore to them he proceeded to slaughter them in the wilderness.”’”—Numbers 14:11-16.

⁷ Moses pleaded for forgiveness, for the sake of Jehovah’s name: “‘Forgive, please, the error of this people according to the

5. How did two faithful spies try to rally Israel?

6, 7. (a) What did Jehovah decide to do when Israel resisted marching into the Promised Land? (b) Why did Moses object to Jehovah’s sentence on Israel, and with what outcome?

3. What does it mean to forgive?

4. After what demonstrations of Jehovah’s power were the Israelites still afraid to enter the Promised Land?

greatness of your loving-kindness, and just as you have pardoned this people from Egypt onward until now.' Then Jehovah said: 'I do forgive according to your word.'" —Numbers 14:19, 20.

Manasseh's Idolatry and David's Adultery

⁸ An outstanding example of Jehovah's forgiveness is the case of Manasseh, the son of good King Hezekiah. Manasseh was 12 years old when he started to reign in Jerusalem. He built the high places, set up altars to the Baals, made sacred poles, bowed to the stars of heaven, practiced magic and sorcery, made spirit mediums and fortune-tellers, put a carved image in the temple of Jehovah, and made his own sons pass through the fire in the Valley of Hinnom. "He did on a grand scale what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah" and "kept seducing Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do worse than the nations that Jehovah had annihilated from before the sons of Israel." —2 Chronicles 33:1-9.

⁹ Finally, Jehovah brought the Assyrians against Judah, and they captured Manasseh and took him to Babylon. "And as soon as it caused him distress, he softened the face of Jehovah his God and kept humbling himself greatly because of the God of his forefathers. And he kept praying to Him, so that He let himself be entreated by him and He heard his request for favor and restored him to Jerusalem to his kingship." (2 Chronicles 33:11-13) Manasseh then removed the foreign gods, idols, and altars and had them thrown outside the city. He began to offer sacrifices on the altar of Jehovah and started Judah toward serving

8. What kind of record did King Manasseh of Judah make?

9. How was Jehovah's face softened toward Manasseh, and with what result?

the true God. This was an amazing demonstration of Jehovah's willingness to forgive when humility, prayer, and corrective action produce fruits befitting repentance! —2 Chronicles 33:15, 16.

¹⁰ King David's adulterous sin with the wife of Uriah the Hittite is well-known. He not only committed adultery with her but also launched an elaborate cover-up when she became pregnant. The king gave Uriah a leave of absence from the war, expecting him to go to his house and have intercourse with his wife. But, out of respect for his fellow soldiers at the battlefront, Uriah declined. David then invited him to eat and got him drunk, but Uriah still did not go in to his wife. David then sent a message to his general to put Uriah in the thick of the fighting in order to get Uriah killed, which is what happened. —2 Samuel 11:2-25.

¹¹ Jehovah sent his prophet Nathan to David to expose the king's sin. "David now said to Nathan: 'I have sinned against Jehovah.' At this Nathan said to David: 'Jehovah, in turn, does let your sin pass by. You will not die.'" (2 Samuel 12:13) David

10. How did David try to cover up his sin with Uriah's wife?

11. How was David brought to repentance for his sin, yet what did he suffer?

In Our Next Issue

**Human Suffering
—Why Does God Permit It?**

**Jehovah—Our Tenderly
Compassionate Father**

**Aiding Our Family
of Believers in Bosnia**

**Nathan helped David
to see the need
for God's forgiveness**

was guilt-stricken over his sin and expressed his repentance in a heartfelt prayer to Jehovah: "For you do not take delight in sacrifice—otherwise I would give it; in whole burnt offering you do not find pleasure. The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:16, 17) Jehovah did not despise David's prayer offered from a broken heart. Still, David did suffer heavy punishment, in keeping with Jehovah's statement about forgiveness at Exodus 34: 6, 7: "By no means will he give exemption from punishment."

**Solomon's Dedication
of the Temple**

¹² When Solomon completed the building of the temple of Jehovah, he said in his prayer of dedication: "You must listen to the entreaties of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place, that you yourself may hear from the place of your dwelling, from the heavens; and

12. What did Solomon request at the time of the dedication of the temple, and what was Jehovah's response?



you must hear and forgive." Jehovah responded: "When I shut up the heavens that no rain may occur and when I command the grasshoppers to eat up the land and if I send a pestilence among my people, and my people upon whom my name has been called humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn back from their bad ways, then I myself shall hear from

the heavens and forgive their sin, and I shall heal their land.”—2 Chronicles 6:21; 7:13, 14.

¹³ As Jehovah looks at you, he accepts you for what you are now, not what you have been. It will be as Ezekiel 33:13-16 says: “When I say to the righteous one: ‘You will positively keep living,’ and he himself actually trusts in his own righteousness and does injustice, all his own righteous acts will not be remembered, but for his injustice that he has done—for this he will die. And when I say to the wicked one: ‘You will positively die,’ and he actually turns back from his sin and carries on justice and righteousness, and the wicked one returns the very thing pledged, pays back the very things taken by robbery, and actually walks in the very statutes of life by not doing injustice, he will positively keep living. He will not die. None of his sins with which he has sinned will be remembered against him. Justice and righteousness are what he has carried on. He will positively keep living.”

¹⁴ The forgiveness that Jehovah God provides for us has a distinctive feature, one that is difficult for human creatures to include with the forgiveness they offer to one another—he both forgives and forgets. Some people will say, ‘I can forgive what you’ve done, but I can’t (or won’t) forget it.’ In contrast, note what Jehovah says he will do: “I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more.”—Jeremiah 31:34.

¹⁵ Jehovah has been forgiving his worshippers on earth for thousands of years.

13. What does Ezekiel 33:13-16 show concerning Jehovah’s view of a person?

14. What is distinctive about Jehovah’s forgiveness?

15. What record of forgiveness does Jehovah have?

He has been forgiving sins they are aware of committing as well as many they are unaware of. His provision of mercy, long-suffering, and forgiveness has been endless. Isaiah 55:7 says: “Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will forgive in a large way.”

Forgiveness in the Christian Greek Scriptures

¹⁶ The accounts of God’s forgiveness saturate the record in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Jesus speaks of it often, showing that he is in harmony with Jehovah’s mind on the subject. Jesus’ thinking comes from Jehovah, he reflects Jehovah, he is the exact representation of Jehovah’s very being; to see him is to see Jehovah.—John 12:45-50; 14:9; Hebrews 1:3.

¹⁷ That Jehovah forgives in a large way is indicated in one of Jesus’ illustrations, that of a king who forgave a slave a debt of 10,000 talents (about \$33,000,000, U.S.). But when that slave would not forgive a fellow slave a debt of a hundred denarii (some \$60, U.S.), the king was furious. “‘Wicked slave, I canceled all that debt for you, when you entreated me. Ought you not, in turn, to have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I also had mercy on you?’ With that his master, provoked to wrath, delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay back all that was owing.” Jesus then made the application: “In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with you if you do not forgive each one his brother from your hearts.”—Matthew 18:23-35.

16. Why can we say Jesus’ practice of forgiveness is in harmony with Jehovah’s?

17. How did Jesus illustrate Jehovah’s forgiving “in a large way”?

¹⁸ Just prior to Jesus' giving the above illustration, Peter came up to Jesus and asked: "Lord, how many times is my brother to sin against me and am I to forgive him? Up to seven times?" Peter thought he was being very generous. Though the scribes and the Pharisees set a limit on forgiveness, Jesus said to Peter: "I say to you, not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21, 22) Seven times would hardly suffice for one day, as Jesus said: "Pay attention to yourselves. If your brother commits a sin give him a rebuke, and if he repents forgive him. Even if he sins seven times a day against you and he comes back to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." (Luke 17:3, 4) When Jehovah forgives, he does not keep count—happily for us.

¹⁹ If we have the humility to repent and confess our sins, Jehovah agrees to respond in our behalf: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9.

18. How did Peter's view of forgiveness compare with Jesus' view?

19. What must we do to obtain Jehovah's forgiveness?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ How does Jehovah deal with our sins, and why?
- ☐ Why was Manasseh restored to his kingship?
- ☐ What distinctive feature of Jehovah's forgiveness is a challenge for humans to imitate?
- ☐ How was Jesus' willingness to forgive so astounding?

²⁰ Jesus' follower Stephen, in a remarkable spirit of forgiveness, cried out this appeal as an enraged mob was pelting him with stones: "'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then, bending his knees, he cried out with a strong voice: 'Jehovah, do not charge this sin against them.' And after saying this he fell asleep in death."—Acts 7:59, 60.

²¹ Jesus set an even more astounding example of willingness to forgive. His enemies had arrested him, illegally tried him, convicted him, mocked him, spat on him, flogged him with a whip with many thongs that likely had bits of bone and metal embedded in them, and finally left him nailed to a stake for hours. The Romans were involved in much of this. Yet, as Jesus was dying on that torture stake, he said to his heavenly Father about the soldiers who had impaled him: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."—Luke 23:34.

²² In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said: "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you." To the end of his earthly ministry, he obeyed that principle himself. Is that too demanding for us, who struggle with the weaknesses of our fallen flesh? At least we should try to put into practice the words Jesus taught his followers after giving them the model prayer: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 5:44; 6:14, 15) If we forgive as Jehovah forgives, we will forgive and forget.

20. What willingness to forgive sin was shown by Stephen?

21. Why was Jesus' willingness to forgive the Roman soldiers so astounding?

22. What words from the Sermon on the Mount must we try to put into practice?

Peter's Tomb

In the Vatican?

“THE tomb of the Prince of the Apostles has been found.” The triumphant announcement of Pope Pius XII was transmitted by Vatican radio. It was the end of 1950, and a complex series of excavations under St. Peter's Basilica had recently been completed. According to some, the results of this archaeological research proved that Peter was really buried in the Vatican. However, not everybody agreed.

For Catholics, St. Peter's Church in the Vatican has a special significance. “The essential purpose of pilgrimage to



Rome is to meet Peter's successor and to receive his blessing," states a Catholic guide, "because Peter came to Rome and was buried there." But was Peter really buried in Rome? Is his tomb in the Vatican? Have his bones been found?

An Archaeological Mystery

The excavations, which began about 1940 and lasted approximately ten years, have been the subject of much controversy. What did the archaeologists appointed by the pope find? For one thing, a pagan cemetery containing numerous tombs. In the midst of them, beneath the present-day papal altar, they identified an aedicula, that is, a niched monument designed to house a statue or an image, set into a wall faced with red plaster and enclosed by two sidewalls. Finally, and quite mysteriously, some human remains also came to light, which, it was said, came from one of the two sidewalls.

This is where the interpretations begin. According to a number of Catholic scholars, the finds confirm the tradition of Peter's residence and martyrdom in Rome during the rule of Nero, perhaps during the persecution of 64 C.E. It has even been said that the remains are relics of the apostle and can be identified as such by an inscription that, according to one interpretation, reads, "Peter is here." It seems that Pope Paul VI was giving credit to this hypothesis when in 1968 he announced the discovery of the "mortal remains of St. Peter, which are worthy of all our devotion and veneration."

Along with the interpretations, however, there were also the counterarguments. Catholic archaeologist Antonio Ferrua, a Jesuit who took part in the Vatican excavations, has affirmed on more than one occasion that he 'had not been allowed to

publish' everything he knows on the subject, material that apparently would contradict the claim that Peter's relics have been identified. What is more, a guide to Rome, edited by Catholic Cardinal Poupard and published in 1991, said that "scientific examination of the human bones found under the foundations of the Red Wall did not seem to bear any relation to the apostle Peter." Strangely enough, in the following edition (later in 1991), the phrase disappeared, and a new chapter, entitled "A Certainty: Peter at St. Peter's," was added.

Interpretation of the Finds

It is evident that the finds are subject to interpretation and that they say different things to different people. Indeed, the most authoritative Catholic historians recognize that "the historical problems of Peter's effective martyrdom in Rome, and of his burial place, are open to debate." What do the finds reveal?

The aedicula monument, according to those who seek to uphold the Catholic tradition, is the "trophy" referred to by a certain Gaius, a priest who lived at the beginning of the third century. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, an ecclesiastical historian of the fourth century, Gaius said that he could 'indicate Peter's trophy on the Vatican Hill.' The supporters of tradition claim that the apostle was buried there, beneath the monument that came to be known as the "trophy of Gaius." Others, however, interpret the results of the excavations quite differently, pointing out that the first Christians paid little attention to the burial of their dead and that even if Peter had been put to death there, the retrieval of his body would have been most improbable. (See box, page 29.)

There are those who *do not* agree that the "trophy of Gaius" (if that is what has been

found) is a tomb. They maintain that it is a monument erected in Peter's honor near the end of the second century and that later it "came to be considered as a grave monument." According to theologian Oscar Cullmann, however, "the Vatican excavations do not identify Peter's tomb at all."

What about the bones? It should be said that where the bones actually came from is still an enigma. Since in the first century a pagan necropolis stood on what is now the Vatican Hill, numerous human remains were buried in the area, and many have already been recovered. The incomplete inscription (probably dating to the fourth century) that some say identifies the place in which the relics were found as the apostle's tomb, may, at best, refer "to the *supposed* presence of the bones of Peter." What is more, many epigraphists are of the opinion that the inscription could even mean "Peter is not here."

An 'Unreliable Tradition'

"The early and more reliable sources do not mention the place of [Peter's] martyrdom, but among the later and less reliable sources there is virtual agreement that it was the Vatican area," says histori-

an D. W. O'Connor. The search for Peter's tomb in the Vatican was therefore based on unreliable traditions. "When relics became of great importance," affirms O'Connor, "Christians came to believe sincerely that the [trophy] of Peter in reality indicated the precise placement of his grave."

These traditions developed side by side with the unscriptural veneration of relics. From the third and fourth centuries on, various ecclesiastical centers employed relics, true and false—and not without economic advantage—in the struggle to achieve "spiritual" supremacy and to promote their own authority. Thus, convinced that Peter's remains had miraculous powers, pilgrims made their way to his supposed tomb. At the end of the sixth century, believers used to throw carefully weighed pieces of material onto the "tomb." "Remarkably," said one contemporary account, "if the faith of the supplicant is firm, when the cloth is retrieved from the tomb, it will be full of divine virtue and will weigh more than it did previously." This indicates the level of credulity at that time.

Over the centuries, legends like this one and traditions devoid of any foundation

"The excavation has revealed no certain traces of a grave beneath the Aedicula; nor indeed can there be any certainty that St. Peter's body was ever recovered from the executioners for burial by the Christian community. In the normal course of events, the body of one who was an alien (*peregrinus*), and in the eyes of the law a common felon, might well have been hurled into the Tiber. . . . There would, moreover, not have been the same interest in the preservation of bodily relics at this early date as there was later, when belief in the imminent end of the world had faded and the cult of martyrs had begun to make its appearance. The possibility, therefore, that St. Peter's body was, in fact, not recovered for burial is a real one."—*The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations*, by Jocelyn Toynbee and John Ward Perkins.

contributed considerably to the growth of the Vatican Basilica's prestige. However, dissenting voices were raised. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Waldenses condemned these excesses and, Bible in hand, explained that Peter had never been to Rome. Centuries later, exponents of the Protestant Reformation argued in a similar vein. In the 18th century, famous philosophers considered the tradition groundless, both historically and Scripturally. The same point of view is shared by capable scholars, Catholic and others, down to this day.

Did Peter Die in Rome?

Peter, a humble Galilean fisherman, certainly did not entertain any idea of primacy over the elders in the first-century Christian congregation. Rather, he defined himself as "a fellow elder." (1 Peter 5:1-6, *Revised Standard Version*) The humble figure of Peter contrasts with the pomp surrounding his supposed tomb, as can be seen by any visitor to the Vatican Basilica.

In order to assert its supremacy over other Christian denominations, the Catholic Church has sought to accredit the 'late and less reliable' tradition that states that Peter resided for some time in Rome. Strangely, though, other ancient traditions would have his burial site, not in the Vatican, but elsewhere in Rome. Yet, why not stick to the *facts* recorded in the Bible, the only source of firsthand information about Peter? From God's Word it is clear that, in obedience to the directions he received from the governing body of the Christian congregation in Jerusalem, Peter carried out his work in the eastern part of the ancient world, including Babylon. —Galatians 2:1-9; 1 Peter 5:13; compare Acts 8:14.

When writing to Christians in Rome, about 56 C.E., the apostle Paul greeted about 30 members of that congregation *without even mentioning Peter*. (Romans 1:1, 7; 16:3-23) Then, between 60 and 65 C.E., Paul wrote six letters *from Rome*, but Peter is not mentioned—strong circumstantial evidence that Peter was not there.* (Compare 2 Timothy 1:15-17; 4:11.) Paul's activity in Rome is described at the end of the book of Acts, but once again, no reference is made to Peter. (Acts 28:16, 30, 31) Consequently, an objective examination of the Biblical evidence, free of all preconceived ideas, can lead only to the conclusion that Peter did not preach in Rome.†

The "primacy" of the pope is based on unreliable traditions and twisted application of scriptures. Jesus, not Peter, is the foundation of Christianity. 'Christ is the head of the congregation,' says Paul. (Ephesians 2:20-22; 5:23) It was Jesus Christ whom Jehovah sent to bless and to save all those who have faith.—John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Romans 15:29; see also 1 Peter 2:4-8.

All those, then, that make their way to what they sincerely believe to be Peter's tomb in order to 'meet his successor' are faced with the problem of whether to accept 'unreliable traditions' or to believe the trustworthy Word of God. Since Christians want their worship to be acceptable to God, they 'look intently at the Perfecter of their faith, Jesus,' and at the perfect example that *he* left for us to follow.—Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21.

* About the years 60-61 C.E., Paul wrote his letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, Philemon, and the Hebrews; about 65 C.E., he wrote his second letter to Timothy.

† The question "Was Peter Ever in Rome?" was considered in *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1972, pages 669-71.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

At Matthew 3:7, why does the "New World Translation" use the longer expression "caught sight of" rather than "saw" as used in many other Bible translations?

Actually, either rendering could be used and would not be wrong. And not all languages readily lend themselves to expressing the flavor of the original Greek in this instance. But the way Matthew 3:7 is expressed in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in English conveys the flavor found in the underlying Greek text. We read: "When [John the Baptizer] *caught sight of* many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to the baptism, he said to them: 'You offspring of vipers, who has intimated to you to flee from the coming wrath?'"

As noted, many Bibles say simply that John "saw" Pharisees and Sadducees coming out to where he was baptizing Jews. Did the Bible mean, though, that John saw this happening over a period of time, as if he watched it for a while and was finally moved to comment on the hypocrisy of their course? The rendering "saw" could lead to such an understanding. In fact, that sense comes to the fore in the rendering by Ferrar Fenton, which says: "But observing many of the Pharisees . . ."

The Greek tense of the verb is what is called aorist. The aorist expresses a punctiliar, or momentary, action, whereas the present tense expresses progressive action (to be doing) and the perfect tense is essentially an action that is completed (to have done). So the sense of the aorist verb at Matthew 3:7 is that John the Baptizer at one point saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, or "he caught sight" of them. As soon as he did, he responded, as we read in verses 7-12.

There are quite a number of instances of this aorist tense used with this sense. Our recognizing its flavor can lead to our gaining a richer feeling for what the Bible is saying.

For example, Matthew 9:9 says: "While passing along from there, Jesus *caught sight of* a man named Matthew seated at the tax office, and he

said to him: 'Be my follower.' Thereupon he did rise up and follow him." Jesus did not have to spend a long time observing Matthew, nor did he have to observe Matthew repeatedly. Jesus caught sight of Matthew, and He acted.

Those are two examples of the care of the *New World Translation* as to Greek verbs in the aorist tense. Consider some similar occurrences, and see what additional flavor you find:

"When, now, he came into the ruler's house and *caught sight of* the flute players and the crowd in noisy confusion, Jesus began to say: 'Leave the place, for the little girl did not die, but she is sleeping.'" —Matthew 9:23, 24.

"When they *caught sight of* him walking on the sea, the disciples were troubled, saying: 'It is an apparition!' And they cried out in their fear. But at once Jesus spoke to them with the words: 'Take courage, it is I.'" —Matthew 14:26, 27.

"Now one of the presiding officers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, came and, on *catching sight of* [Jesus], he fell at his feet and entreated him many times, saying: 'My little daughter is in an extreme condition. Would you please come and put your hands upon her.'" —Mark 5:22, 23.

"As he got near the gate of the city [of Nain], why, look! there was a dead man being carried out, the only-begotten son of his mother. Besides, she was a widow. A considerable crowd from the city was also with her. And when the Lord *caught sight of* her, he was moved with pity for her, and he said to her: 'Stop weeping.'" —Luke 7:12, 13.

"So Mary, when she arrived where Jesus was and *caught sight of* [Jesus], fell at his feet, saying to him: 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' Jesus, therefore, when he saw her weeping and the Jews that came with her weeping, groaned in the spirit." —John 11:32, 33.

If you would like to read additional instances, look up Acts 7:23-25; 9:39, 40; 21:32; 28:3-5; and 1 John 5:16. Doing so may further illustrate how satisfying it can be for keen students of the Bible to broaden, or deepen, their grasp of what is written in God's Word.

‘Do Not Sorrow Just as the Rest Do’

HAVE you ever noticed the way a flower seems bowed down after weathering a storm? In a way it is a touching sight. After all, the cloudburst likely sent countless animals and people—far harder creations than any flower—scurrying for shelter. Yet, the flower stood there, rooted, facing the weather’s full fury. Now, here it is intact, bowed but unbroken, showing a strength that belies its delicate appearance. You may wonder, as you admire it, if it will regain its vigor and lift its lovely head to the sky once more.

It is much the same with people. In these troubled times, we face all manner of storms. Economic hardships, depression, failing health, the loss of a loved one in death—such tempests assail all of us at one time or another, and sometimes we can no more avoid them than the flower can uproot itself and run for cover. It is moving to see individuals who appear quite frail show surprising strength and endure such onslaughts. How do they do it? Often the key is faith. Jesus Christ’s half brother James

wrote: “You know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure.”—James 1:3, *Today’s English Version*.

Another key is hope. When death strikes a loved one, for example, hope can make a world of difference to the survivors. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Thessalonica: “We do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13) While Christians certainly do grieve because of death, there is a difference. They have accurate knowledge about the condition of the dead and about the hope of the resurrection.—John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.

This knowledge gives them hope. And that hope, in turn, gradually softens their grief. It helps them to endure, and more. In time, like the flower after the storm, they may lift their heads up from grief and find joy and fulfillment in life once again.

